

Margarita: More than a girl's name.

By George Sinclair.

There are many stories about the Margarita's creation, some from as far back as the 1920s and some from as late as the second half of the 1950s. Now I am not going to list every single one, just those which are more probable. Hopefully I will prove to you who did create America's favorite [sic] cocktail, and also the others who did not, but claimed to have invented it anyway.

The earliest citation for a Margarita Cocktail is the **December 1953 issue of Esquire magazine**:

"Drink of the Month"

"She's from Mexico, Senores, and her name is the Margarita Cocktail--and she is lovely to look at, exciting and provocative."

1 ounce tequila
Dash of Triple Sec
Juice of 1/2 lime or lemon

Pour over crushed ice, stir. Rub the rim of a stem glass with rind of lemon or lime, spin in salt--pour, and sip."

With 1953 being the cut-off point for possible claims to the creatorship of the Margarita, it is time to turn our attention to earlier recipes, made with the same ingredients, but with different names.

The earliest citation for a cocktail recipe that is comprised of Tequila, Cointreau (i.e. Triple Sec), and lime juice is from 1937, and was listed in the **Cafe Royal Cocktail Book**, by W. J. Tarling; And the recipe is stated as follows:

Picador.

1/2 Tequila
1/4 Cointreau
1/4 Lime Juice

Shake with Ice; Cocktail Glass.

Note: The Cafe Royal Cocktail Book also lists a drink called a Toreador, which is the same proportions as the Picador, but it substitutes the Cointreau for Apricot Brandy.

Even though the Cafe Royal Cocktail Book is a publication of the UKBG (United Kingdom Bartenders Guild), it is not a cause for national pride on the part of the British Cocktail Contingent? Unfortunately, the above libation is not the drink that would become famous as the Margarita, even though it is exactly the same recipe. What we are looking for is an American drink, made on American or Mexican soil, with the same ingredients, but which is less refined than its British counterpart. Please note that there is nothing to say that someone didn't read the Cafe Royal Cocktail Book and then just renamed the drink.

American Advertising.

An advertising campaign in the Reno Evening Gazette, started in 1943 and continued well into 1944, was pushing Tequila, and it recommended mixing them in classic cocktails, the selection that they chose to push were as follows:

Reno Evening Gazette, 6th July 1944:

"Tequila Cocktail", "Tequila Sour", "**Tequila Side car**", "Tequila Fizz", "Tequila Martini", "Tequila Gibson",

A Tequila Side-car is what most people categorise the Margarita cocktail as, especially when trying to explain how cocktails develop over time. Is this the American version of the Picador (see **Cafe Royal Cocktail Book**)?

Another cocktail that gets touted often as a proto-Margarita is the Tequila Daisy, this idea stems from similarities with older daisy recipes and the Margarita. However, there are two breeds of Daisy cocktail; one served short, made with spirit, sugar, sour and orange liqueur, and another served long, with spirit, grenadine, sour, and sodawater. The big problem is that there are no specific recipes for a Tequila Daisy from the 1930s or 1940s, although the name is mentioned frequently enough.

The Weekly Kansas City Star, 15th January 1936.

"The undertaker tells a joke about St. Anthony between sips of a tequila daisy."

The Syracuse Herald, 19th August 1936

"Syracuse's Newest and Refreshing Drink TEQUILA DAISY"

Albuquerque Journal, 19th July 1939

"Banned also was the sale of hard liquor and mixed drinks in cafes, where only beer and wine may now be obtained in lieu of the ubiquitous tequila daisy..."

In the 1939 book, *Saber-tooth Curriculum*, the protagonist is frequently depicted as consuming tequila daisies; Even though there are 5 mentions of the drink with the books pages, the author does not think it worthy to mention the actual recipe. Perhaps it was so well known that mentioning such a commonplace recipe was deemed unnessecary, alas the facts are unknown at this time.

The Saber-tooth Curriculum, by By Abner J Peddiwell, 1939

"If you don't mind," he announced, "I will have one of these tequila daisies."

It seems strange that a drink which was apparently so well-known would just disappear off the map; Unless, as the theory goes, Daisy (the word) was simply translated into Spanish (Margarita), and thus the Tequila Daisy became the Tequila Margarita.

Before moving on to do a rundown of the more well-known "creators" of the Margarita, I would like to bring to your attention to a semi-famous Mexican woman by the name of Doña Bertha, who owned a cantina in Taxco, Mexico. She was famous for her Tequila drink, but it was not, as some presume, a Margarita; It was a a Tequila *Limonada*. The earliest reference to Doña Bertha's special drink from 1944, however it is not until 1949 that an actual recipe is to be found:

"ALL THE BEST IN MEXICO", by Sidney Clark, 1949.

"...in Taxco, where a famous tequila cocktail called the "Bertha" is an established feature of life..."

"The Bertha, made with lime juice and simple syrup, looks like a Tom Collins but tastes remarkably like a Daiquiri."

The first of the more well-known inventors of the Margarita is a fellow by the name of Danny Negrete; the fanciful version of his story states that he created

the Margarita for his girlfriend, who absolutely loved salt, therefore she made him make her drink with it as a component. However, according to Dr. William K. Lombardo, who interviewed Salvador Negrete, Danny's son, the real story is quite different:

Quoted from: www.pocolocolombardo.com/margaritachronicles_1.htm

"I interviewed Salvador Negrete, the son of Daniel Negrete, the purported inventor of the Margarita. Salvador says there are many fallacious stories about the origin of the Margarita, ... but that " this is the true story." The family story goes that Danny opened a bar at the Garci Crispo hotel with his brother, David. The day before his brother's marriage, Daniel presented the Margarita as a wedding present to Margarita, his sister-in-law. Danny combined one-third Triple Sec, one-third Tequila and one-third squeezed Mexican lime juice. The drink was not blended and was served with hand- crushed ice."

The next Margarita story involves a man by the name of Carlos "Danny" Herrera, who when he died in 1992 had his claim to the Margarita publicised; The following is taken from his obituary:

Daily Herald, Chicago, 17th May 1992.

"Herrera's relatives say he invented the drink at Rancho La Gloria, a restaurant he opened in 1935 at his home south of Tijuana. He told friends that it was sometime in **1938 or '39** that he decided to mix a jigger of white tequila with lemon juice, shaved ice, triple sec and — the crowning touch — salt. Local legend has it that one of his customers was a showgirl and sometime actress who called herself Marjorie King. She was allergic to all hard liquor except tequila, and she didn't like to drink that straight. That reputedly set Herrera to experimenting, and he named the result "margarita" after the actress, the legend goes."

The next contender for the title of Margarita creator is Francisco "Pancho" Morales, his story is chronicled in the **Texas Monthly, the October issue 1974:**

"A favorite story among Texans is that a bartender named Pancho Morales invented the Margarita on **July 4, 1942**, at a Juárez bar named Tommy's Place. Supposedly, it all began when a woman requested a Magnolia (brandy, Cointreau, and an egg yolk topped with champagne). Morales was a little fuzzy on the recipe, so he improvised—and his ersatz creation was a big hit."

The problem with all of the stories about the Margarita is that their first

printed citation will be decades after the actual event, which doesn't help verification. The majority of Margarita stories in circulation on the internet can usually be traced to one newspaper article, which in most cases will be that particular claimants obituary. Dead men tell no tales, after all.

As well as mentioning who may have created the Margarita, it is a good thing to remember that there were also customers drinking these Margaritas. According to William Grimes, former restaurant critic for the New York Times, and author of *Straight Up or on the Rocks: The Story of the American Cocktail*, many people actually recall drinking Margaritas in the 1930s. From the mish-mash of facts that leaves just Danny Negrete or "Danny" Herrera; But without any solid evidence there is no real proof, to say one way or the other who is the Margaritas inventor.

In closing, no matter who you choose to believe actually invented the Margarita, you are probably using your own preference as the actual recipe that you serve to customers. Historical recipes are one thing, but the best tasting recipe is usually a completely different story. Below is a table of Margarita recipes and their proportions/ ratios:

3:2:1 = 6:4:2 (50% tequila, double as much Triple Sec than fresh lime juice).
3:1:1 = 6:2:2 (60% tequila, 20% Triple Sec, 20% fresh lime juice).
2:1:1 = 6:3:3 (50% tequila, 25% Triple Sec, 25% fresh lime juice).
1:1:1 = 6:6:6 (33% tequila, 33% Triple Sec, 33% fresh lime juice).

Personally, I favour the story of Danny Negrete, but I savour a different recipe, the 2:1:1.

As long as you keep away from the blender and the strawberries, I will be your friend.

Salud!